

DPH Dental Program Launches School-Based Smile Check Program



East Millsboro Elementary Student Hajra Sultan smiles during her visit with Registered Dental Hygienist Ashley Hudson and school nurse Erica Jester.

Dover – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is pleased to announce the launch of its newest school-based oral health outreach program, the Delaware Smile Check (DSC). Debut screenings took place in Sussex County at Seaford Central Elementary School on January 17, and the program has already been conducted at seven schools throughout the state. To date, 1,018 children have received screenings from a DPH hygienist who informs parents/guardians of each child's oral health status through a report card that is sent home. In addition to the screenings, 1,018 students received preventive applications of fluoride varnish to strengthen teeth against decay and reverse early cavities.

The Delaware Smile Check is a grant-funded program that seeks to connect under-served children with dental homes and help coordinate treatment for children who have emergency dental needs. As a result of this program, 206 students have received

referrals to treat suspected cavities, and 217 students who were identified as needing emergency care received help finding a dentist to treat them immediately.

“This is an amazing example of partnership between schools, the state and Delaware’s dental community,” said DPH Dental Director Nicholas Conte. “We appreciate the work everyone has done to provide these opportunities for the children.” So far, 46 dentists throughout the state have opened their doors to patients referred from this program, both insured and uninsured, to ensure they receive the treatment needed and establish a dental home for the future. As an additional component, just under 3,000 students from pre-k to grade 8 have received educational presentations in their schools from registered dental hygienists who gave lessons highlighting the importance of oral health.

“As a dental hygienist in Sussex County, I’m very excited to be joining forces with this community and school-based dental screening program. It has opened my eyes to the importance and genuine need of access to care, dental education, and dental disease prevention among children. I am very confident this program will become a success and am grateful for this opportunity to work within my local community,” said participating dental hygienist Ashley Hudson, RDH, BSDH.

The program currently relies entirely on grant funds and donations to provide the supplies necessary to carry out the screenings. Early in February, Dental Health Products, Inc. (DHPI) donated fluoride varnish, toothbrushes, and toothpaste that was distributed to high risk children in participating schools.

“The Division of Public Health is grateful for the generous donation of dental supplies to support the Smile Check Program,” said Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “We know that a child’s oral health has an impact on their overall health and self-esteem. This will help our dental program serve our most

vulnerable children and set them on the path to good oral and overall health for years to come.”

“Dental Health Products, Inc. (DHPI) is proud to support the dental professional community,” said LaDeana DeClark, special markets representative for DHPI. “The Smile Check Program diligently ensures local youth have the proper supplies to maintain optimal oral health. DHPI is more than a supply and equipment



Donation of dental supplies to school based Smile Check program.

dealer. DHPI is a partner for a common cause to improve oral health care for all ages.”

Twenty more schools are scheduled for the 2016-2017 school year and DPH is excited to expand the program to areas of the state that have been traditionally more difficult to access.

Schools interested in participating in this program should contact Gena Riley in the Bureau of Dental Health Services at Gena.Riley@delaware.gov.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY

services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.